THRIVE!
SURREY IN 2030
A RESIDENTS’ LAB ON
THE FUTURE OF THEIR CITY

NOV 7, 2015

DIALOGUE SUMMARY
THrive! Surrey in 2030 – A Residents’ Lab on the Future of their City, was hosted by SFU Public Square as part of the 2015 We the City Community Summit, and in partnership with the City of Surrey, the SFU Centre for Dialogue’s Civic Engage Program, and SFU Surrey. We would also like to acknowledge the generous support of the Bruce and Lis Welch Foundation, Vancity, Kasian Architecture, PW Trenchless/NASTTBC, and the Jarislowky Foundation.

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Each year, we are grateful for the outstanding contributions of our team of volunteers who so willingly donate their time and enthusiasm to ensuring the Summit’s success.

SFU Public Square

SFU Public Square, a signature initiative designed to spark, nurture, and restore community connections, establishes Simon Fraser University as the go-to convener of serious and productive conversations about issues of public concern. More than a single place or program, SFU Public Square assembles the hearts, minds, and talents of diverse communities to promote inclusive, intelligent, and inspiring dialogue. SFU Public Square events and offerings advance SFU’s vision to be Canada’s leading community-engaged research university. For more information, visit sfu.ca/publicsquare

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Civic Engage is a program of Simon Fraser University’s Centre for Dialogue designed to increase the capacity of governments and citizens to work collaboratively on policy decisions. The program leverages the Centre for Dialogue’s status as a neutral facilitator and reputation as a globally-recognized centre for knowledge and practice in dialogue. Program focus areas include capacity building, direct services, research, and public forums. Civic Engage’s participation in THRIVE! was made possible through a grant from the Bruce and Lis Welch Foundation. For more information, visit sfu.ca/civic-engage.
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The Jarislowsky Foundation
INTRODUCTION

THRIVE! Surrey in 2030 – A Resident’s Lab on the Future of their City was a feature event of SFU Public Square’s 2015 Community Summit: We The City. Through a series of imaginative and interactive events from October 30th to November 7th, we explored the theme of citybuilding. Inviting residents to consider the power they hold in shaping their city, we deliberated on possible futures where everyone can thrive. We invigorated the public conversation on how people can connect with cities, find their voice, and enjoy increased participation in civic life.

What happens when you invite Surrey residents to take on the role of city planners for a day, to sketch out what a thriving future for the city could look like? On November 7, 2015, SFU Public Square did exactly that. On a rain-drenched Saturday morning 125 people of all ages, from all parts of the city and from all walks of life came together to help the City move forward on its updated Sustainability Charter.
Like planners, they also had to deal with uncertainty and unexpected developments. While we can make projections about population growth, there are many things we don’t know about the future. To simulate this experience, the residents-turned-planners at City Hall were confronted with another challenge half-way through the dialogue: 50 new participants arrived—and just like newcomers to the city who will be welcomed in Surrey in the coming decades—they came with their own ideas of what Surrey in 2030 could be.

What ensued was the sharing of diverse ideas and viewpoints, as well as hard work to help the City move forward. Participants discovered that working and planning together is not always smooth and easy, yet THRIVE! was a day marked by extraordinary collaborative spirit.

On the following pages, you will find a summary of what happened at THRIVE!, a description of the group of residents who stepped up to be planners for a day, and the recommendations they developed.

“We all felt passionate about Surrey and her future, so that helped us work very well together.”

— THRIVE! Participant
WHO WAS IN THE ROOM?

THRIVE! broke new ground in bringing together a “mini public” that reflected the demographic diversity of Surrey. More than 180 residents applied to attend, and a survey completed by all participants showed that their most important motivation for doing so was the opportunity to use their voice, learn and interact with people from different backgrounds. Eighty-one percent of the participants said they wanted to share their ideas about the future of Surrey. Sixty-six percent stated that their motivation was to work with other residents who represent the diversity of Surrey. Fifty-nine percent indicated they wanted to learn more about city planning and Surrey’s Sustainability Charter.

Surrey is one of the largest municipalities in Canada in terms of its geographical size, and is separated into six distinct neighbourhoods. THRIVE! was designed to bring residents from across Surrey together and, importantly, also include people who don’t normally attend City engagement processes; and THRIVE! delivered: 48 percent of participants indicated that they had not previously participated in City of Surrey engagement events or the online engagement platform CitySpeaks (see Figure 1). What’s equally encouraging is that after the event, 79 percent of all participants indicated that given their experience at THRIVE!, they are interested in attending other public engagement events in Surrey.

Another characteristic that defines Surrey is the diverse mix that makes up the community’s cultural fabric. THRIVE! participants were asked during the application process with which ethnic or cultural communities they identified primarily. Figure 4 shows the communities that were mentioned most frequently, with British, Indian, and Filipino at the top. This is consistent with recent census data. The Other category covers a range of different communities, including the responses of participants who identified as Canadians.
Most residents, however, did not see their participation in THRIVE! primarily through the lens of their ethnic or cultural identities. Figure 5 shows that when asked about the most important identities that informed their participation, residents most frequently chose identities other than ethnicity and culture. Ethnic or cultural ties came in only fourth, after being a parent or an advocate for a specific cause, and after identities based on people’s occupation. Other identities that were mentioned frequently include being a resident of Surrey or a specific neighbourhood, age (seniors, youth), gender, citizenship, or being personally affected by a specific issue.

Figure 4 – With which cultural or ethnic communities do THRIVE! participants identify primarily?

Figure 5 – Most Common Identities of THRIVE! Participants*

* Multiple answers possible
THE CHALLENGE:
A THRIVING AND SUSTAINABLE SURREY

At THRIVE!, participants were tasked with developing recommendations to help inform the update of Surrey’s Sustainability Charter. The Charter is the City’s comprehensive framework for implementing a progressive, long-term, 50-year vision for a sustainable city. City Council first adopted a Sustainability Charter in 2008. The Charter defined sustainability as:

Meeting the needs of the present generation in terms of socio-cultural systems, the economy and the environment while promoting a high quality of life but without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

In 2015, the City sought input from Surrey residents, stakeholders, staff, and Council, to revisit the question: what kind of community would we like Surrey to be in 2058? The updated Sustainability Charter will have new and refined goals to get Surrey where its residents want it to be. THRIVE! gave participants an opportunity to advise the City on how to make progress towards those goals by 2030—the next leg on the way towards making the vision for Surrey’s future a reality.

Surrey’s Sustainability Charter Themes:

- Inclusion
- Built Environment and Neighbourhoods
- Community Safety
- Economic Prosperity and Livelihoods
- Ecosystems
- Education and Culture
- Health and Wellness
- Infrastructure

The outcomes covered a broad spectrum of planning issues and ranged from ensuring that all Surrey residents are safe and have a strong sense of security, to solutions for reducing per capita water consumption. A full list of themes and outcomes can be found on pp. 21-34. Facilitators and resource people from the City of Surrey and other partner organizations used their skills and expertise to support participants during the entire day.

What participants at City Hall didn’t know was that another group of residents was meeting simultaneously at SFU’s Surrey Campus. This group had been informed in advance that they were to carry out a “special mission”. They first received a briefing from City staff about projected trends and Surrey’s sustainability targets, and then had the opportunity to discuss the same sustainability topics that participants were considering at City Hall.

Participant voices – What contributed to good dialogue at THRIVE! Surrey in 2030?

“Everyone was knowledgeable at something.”

“Our level of expertise and team skills complemented each other very nicely.”

“People were willing to take turns, listen to each other, and validate the opinions of each other.”

“Everybody was able to speak.”

“We have a very diverse background.”
After the SFU group finished their discussion, they joined their fellow residents at City Hall and—just like newcomers that will be moving to Surrey in the coming decade-and-a-half—introduced an element of surprise with their new ideas and questions regarding Surrey in 2030.

Once all THRIVE! participants had a chance to get to know each other at City Hall, it was their task to come up with strategies and key actions to make progress towards their table’s sustainability outcome. As one would expect, the introduction of new people and viewpoints made for interesting dynamics at some of the tables as new ideas had to be integrated and previously agreed upon solutions had to be reconsidered. At some tables, the integration went more smoothly than at others. But as Figure 6 shows, the vast majority of participants rated the level of collaboration at their table as good, very good or even excellent. Figure 7 further shows that participants gave overwhelmingly positive feedback on their experience at THRIVE!
The fourteen groups of THRIVE! resident-turned-city planners responded in different ways to the challenge of coming up with recommendations for the sustainability outcomes that was assigned to their table. However, some clear themes and patterns emerged during the day.

All participants received a discussion guide prior to the event asking them to take into account the needs of the entire community rather than specific groups, as well as the interconnected relationships between different issues. The strategies and recommendations that the tables came up with show that participants clearly embraced this perspective.

In developing their solutions, participants stressed holistic approaches and the need for better connections and integration between issues, groups, geographic parts of the city, and even within City Hall. One group, for example, emphasized that community safety was linked to issues related not only to crime, but also to health and food security. Other groups linked the question of how to promote a thriving local economy to the issues of affordable housing, diversity, and socio-economic barriers.
Part of the reason why participants stressed the connections of their table's outcome to others may be that providing more detailed solutions for a focused challenge would require more time and additional technical information. But the theme of connection and integration that emerged from the dialogue would also seem to reflect the diversity of participants' viewpoints, interests, and expertise. It also strongly suggests that residents are more than able to take a step back from their individual viewpoints and adopt a perspective that takes into account the well being of an entire city.

Another theme that is evident across the groups' various recommendations is community and civic engagement. Participants stressed, for example, that community safety, health and wellness or ecosystem stewardship can only be realized through strong community engagement. One group mentioned youth engagement as a key part of their strategy to improve the local economy. Another group of THRIVE! participants declared in their strategy to reduce water consumption that they would "listen to residents via committee and regular council meetings".

Participant voices – What is your recommendation to the City of Surrey?

"Sustainability must be centred on inclusion, if we don’t engage our socially marginalized citizens, then we won’t be able to achieve fully sustainable communities."

"Continue to invite youth to get involved by volunteering and participating in events like this one."

"Listen to the citizens who come from ALL backgrounds."

"Surrey needs to embrace diversity. Treat this fortunate situation of different ideas and cultures as a strength. We need similar open dialogue to reconcile the differences of opinion among many different people."

"Continue to engage residents on a local level; create more opportunities such as Thrive to involve citizens in the decision making process."

"Look at increased integration to solve systemic issues leading to unhealthy communities and poverty...A healthy community looks like a healthy ecosystem—it is diverse and resilient."

Figure 8 – Themes of Participants’ Advice to the City of Surrey

As Figure 8 shows, this was by far the most common piece of advice, followed by ensuring that recommendations are implemented and outcomes realized, and by increasing connection and integration in the City.
RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

On the following pages, we present the recommended strategies and actions that the breakout tables developed during the day. Each table was assigned one outcome that the City is working towards to achieve the goals specified in the updated Sustainability Charter.

TABLE 1

Strategy: Surrey should lead by example by creating public places as anchors for people to connect in a safe environment.

Key actions:
• Build physical spaces for people to connect that are open late and offer a safe, inclusive environment.
• Build a simple communication system to connect residents, groups, and visitors.
• Offer low-cost programming options within those physical spaces that include all diverse communities and age groups.
• Offer neighbourhood “bumping spaces” (including City Hall) that bring opportunities for people and communities to connect in a new way: public plazas, lending libraries, community gardens/kitchens, public art, hangout spaces).

TABLE 4

Key actions:
• Better access to education and information (on services/connections) that caters to local community.
• Build inventory of services and facilities (with analysis of their effectiveness).
• Safety
• Better access to transportation (financial accessibility, provide seasonal discounts).
• Identify ways to reach all communities.
• Provide social services that meet the needs of different groups and generations (mobile outreach model).
• Different scale of events for all communities throughout the city.
• Research services offered by other cities to find ways of making the system and programs more effective.
TABLE 2

Strategy:
• Infrastructure development
• Promote diversity
• Safe, inclusive, accessible spaces

Key actions:
• Connectivity between Surrey’s 6 city centres (with good transportation).
• Incentives for green infrastructure and affordable housing.
• “Eyes on the street” – more density (i.e. community looking out for one another).
• Design for all ages (i.e. seniors, daycare, etc.).

TABLE 5

Strategy: Implement codes for building with high standards. Building permits should focus on the “big picture”.

Key actions:
1) Focus development around transit.
   • Clean and safe transit
   • High-end buses
   • Bike sharing
   • Visible security/police
   • Don’t have to wait for transit
   • Easy to use, easy to get from “A” to “B”

2) Building strategy
   • Green codification/greenery
   • Plazas
   • Gardens
   • Cycle storage areas
   • Interesting and unique architecture
   • Public art
   • “Softer” buildings
   • Free access

3) Higher Education
   • UBC campus
   • Breadth of courses

4) Accessibility
   • Encourage affordable as well as high-end transit and hotels.

5) Zoning for entertainment district
   • Art galleries
   • Museums
   • Stadium
   • Some should be “world class”

6) Centre for culture
   • Fusion festival
   • Downtown centre to become “international” cultural centre.
   • Information centre

7) Attract visitors to Holland Park
   • Sculptures in the park
   • Dedicate as central green space
   • Build network of park-to-park walking areas.

SUSTAINABILITY THEME: BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Charter Goal: A beautiful, accessible and well-connected city of distinct and complete neighbourhoods that are walkable, engaging, resilient, and restorative.

Sustainability Outcome: The City Centre is a dynamic, attractive, and complete metropolitan area and important international destination.
SUSTAINABILITY THEME:
ECONOMIC PROSPERITY
AND LIVELIHOODS

Charter Goal: Continued prosperity and thriving livelihoods fostered through a strong, equitable, and diverse economy, responsible use of natural, financial and human resources, and collaborative business strategies.

Sustainability Outcome: A significant proportion of goods and services are provided by locally owned companies, creating a robust local economy and retaining wealth and jobs in the community.

TABLE 3

Strategy:
• Better engage youth starting in middle school for job orientation and education (skills, tech, trades). Offer extra-curricular activities, courses, and entertainment in a safe environment.
• Better transportation and infrastructure to access easy transit and walking to facilities with enough buses and roads.
• Invite businesses to create jobs and sustainable communities.
• Promote more green businesses to locate in Surrey.
• Remove stigma of Surrey being unsafe.

Key actions:
• Change the education system to equip the youth for current and future demands, esp. tech and trades.
• Deliver on transportation and better infrastructure.
• Promote manufacturing and raw materials processing to create jobs.
• Segregate residential areas from industrial areas: licensing to be monitored for all business to match suitability of location.
• Affordable housing and building “up” to be spread out across the city to allow high-rises not just in downtown areas and to include more housing for seniors.

TABLE 6

Strategy:
• Challenge social and economic issues in collaboration with members of the community, to empower the community to remove barriers to create sustainable solutions.
• Successful approach to economic growth includes recognition of diverse groups within Surrey with diverse requirements for education, training, transportation, recreation, and living in Surrey. Diversity goes beyond ethnic/cultural to include family formation, age, disability, LGBTQ, income levels.
• Consider range of ways to bring in business to Surrey e.g. tax breaks, transportation, etc.

Key actions:
• Increase resources from high school to post-secondary for employer/educator-integrated skills training (see BCIT model of practicums).
• Surrey-centric transit system plan that is responsive to changing needs, accessible to needs of all, including youth and the less wealthy.
• Promote local businesses/enterprises to residents so Surrey can buy local goods and consume local services e.g. via resource assistance.
• Partner with other organizations (e.g. not-for-profits) to create practical social programs to remove barriers to work so everyone can be part of Surrey’s economy, e.g. childcare provision, skills training, English-language training, and newcomer integration programs.
• Growth and outreach to bring diverse businesses and jobs that are sustainable in Surrey, including arts, culture, and performances to showcase Surrey.
TABLE 7

Strategy:
- Self-sustaining neighbourhoods
- ARL [sic] Sustainability – Community safety is linked to: environment, food, crime, health, and agriculture.

Key actions:
- Which levels of government will be integrated to implement this plan?
- Create one place to call where agency knows.
- Large scale youth mentorship program (college students to high school to elementary).
- Public health resource centres.
- Healthy campuses lead to less crime.
- Community-based mental Health Hospital.
- More opportunity for English Language Learners (ELL) resources (more cultivating community-based leaders).
- Creating city hubs that will provide access to all resources for that community.
- Create food security strategy.

SUSTAINABILITY THEME: COMMUNITY SAFETY

Charter Goal: A city in which all people live, work, learn, and play in a safe and engaged environment.

Sustainability Outcome: People are safe and have a strong sense of security in all neighbourhoods and throughout the city.

TABLE 12

Strategy: We recommend the City focus on three key areas for improving community safety:
- COORDINATION of 24/7 safe transportation connections between town centres, emergency preparedness, and multi-ethnic sharing of sports, food, culture, green spaces, and gardens.
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT in crime prevention through social media, block watch, community patrols, reporting without fear in multiple languages.
- PREVENTION measures for mental illness, drug addiction, and homelessness, such as InSite and low-income housing.

Key actions:
- Coordinated transportation 24/7 between town centres and safety at transportation hubs/stops.
- More community engagement in crime prevention via avenues such as social media, a form of Block Watch, Amber Alert, “Green Vests”
- Neighbourhood coordination of emergency preparedness
- Positive cooperation: Transportation co-op, community gardens, tool sharing, multi-ethnic sports, community kitchens, youth programs.
**SUSTAINABILITY THEME: ECOSYSTEMS**

**Charter Goal:** Healthy, protected, and well-maintained ecosystems and biodiversity.

**Sustainability Outcome:** Surrey residents support biodiversity and are stewards of the community’s natural areas and the urban forest.

**TABLE 8**

**Strategy:**
- Less siloed work in city departments: integrate all departments and ensure they have an equal voice so our Surrey is a holistic place to be.
- Plan for extreme weather events and mitigate, i.e., build cisterns to collect water to reduce water run-off during rainfall and mitigate high tide/storm surge events.
- Taxes and fees need to go to the area where the money is supposed to go, such as local parks/playgrounds, bylaw inspection, bike lanes
- Reach children in schools by city experts to educate elementary students about ecosystem and diversity and when they are important to our own survival and quality of life.

**Key actions:**
- Water: Identify and protect riparian zones on all streams and rivers. Reduce run-off surges, encourage use of cisterns, prevent paving portions of lots so water goes into aquifer.
- Air: good transportation corridors; bike lanes; protected and widened streets; better transit.
- Parks/trees: small developers need to contribute towards park development; reduce size of developments to keep trees in condo and townhouse communities; parks need more maintenance, trim trees, replace older trees.
- Alternative energy: allow people to install solar panels; plan for extreme weather events, bury hydro poles, clear trees from all towers and near surface lines.
- Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR): While the ALR is a provincial area, the City of Surrey needs to recommend no more land be removed from ALR and ask to be consulted on all requests. If farms are bought and left fallow, owners should have to lease the land to people who want to farm.

**SUSTAINABILITY THEME: EDUCATION AND CULTURE**

**Charter Goal:** Access to diverse, high quality learning opportunities, and vibrant arts, heritage and cultural experiences for all Surrey residents.

**Sustainability Outcome:** An enviable and vibrant arts and heritage sector contributes to Surrey’s citizen engagement, economy, community livability, and civic pride.

**TABLE 9**

**Key Actions:**
- Engage local neighbourhoods in arts and heritage, using public spaces.
- Use art and heritage to tell the neighbourhood stories.
- Be proactive in empowering youth to be engaged in the process of arts, education, and heritage.
- Using and employing local artists in implementing arts and heritage to understand the story behind the art.
- Ensuring diversity by improving accessibility and inclusivity to our arts and cultural programming (different voices, mediums, languages).
TABLE 10

**Strategy:** Improve access to health and wellness through transportation, communication, and outreach. Increase the number of service facilities to increase access and integration of health and wellness services, which will help balance future development.

**Key actions:**
- Transportation: Increase connectivity within town centres via bike trails, bike lanes, and between community resources (banks, grocery stores, doctors’ offices, etc.; create connectivity between town centres through increased public transit (LRT).
- Increase communication dissemination: go to where people are (temples, mosques, churches, seniors’ homes, schools, township hall meetings). Ask demographic and ethnic groups what is an effective way to get information to them to increase integration and accessibility.
- Reduce financial barriers: find respectful ways to provide subsidies for low-income families, i.e. provide subsidized childcare, increase initiatives for poverty reduction so everyone is able to access recreation and leisure opportunities.
- Outreach: provide flexible and affordable programming within existing recreation centres as well as within communities / neighbourhoods through recreation centres.
- Integration: community leaders and mentorship opportunities need to be encouraged, communities that lead to increased well-being.

TABLE 15

**Strategy:** Get people physically active by creating a network of connected bike trails/lanes and walking trails that connect homes, workplace, shopping, and leisure.

We recognize that Surrey is already doing well in offering recreational opportunities in certain areas (large recreation centres). In addition to large recreation centres, we need to create smaller versions of recreation centres that are easily accessible by walking or biking in all neighbourhoods.

Future developments should emphasize open public spaces that are walkable, engaging, welcoming, entertaining—providing activities to bring people together, such as: food carts, concerts, pianos, farmers markets, festivals (ie. Roller Derby).

**Key actions:**
- Connect destination-bike lanes that go somewhere.
- Create public spaces that are engaging, that have purpose, opportunities, events, to bring people together, including transportation to get there.
- Talk about health and wellness at schools and work places.
- Address barriers to participation: e.g. provide child care.
- Provide separate funding for arts and parks and recreation.
- Provide integrated transit system linking all six centres: bus rapid transit, LRT, need arterial routes, dedicated lanes, must be welcoming and comfortable, LRT to be pleasing and aesthetic, electric carsharing + outlets for charging.
TABLE 11

Strategy: Increase grey water usage and recycling technologies through creativity and accessibility of ideas. Partnerships are needed between governmental organizations and NGOs.

Key actions:
- Provide incentives to industrial/residential users to reduce water consumption: consumption must be metered for each household, meters to include a notification system.
- Engagement: engage new and existing residents in culturally accessible ways (translation, sign-language, inclusive environment).
- Education: run campaigns in schools.
- Recycling H2O: removing red tape and enable water recycling; insist on grey-water recycling for new developments.
- Political will: at all levels of government.

TABLE 16

Strategy: Transparency is a significant issue, ensure we listen to residents via committee and regular council meetings. Our recommendations regarding water conservation should be addressed in community meetings around the city while taking a holistic approach.

Key actions:
- Transparency: involve community to be a part of the decision-making process through neighbourhood and community meetings.
- Education: What are the issues and what choices do we have to conserve water? We should answer these questions to the general public.
- Communication: Ultimately, we need to be in constant contact with residents to keep everyone updated with regards to new bylaws/water restrictions. New technology (i.e. Surrey App) is a good start.
- Implementation: water metering, new bylaws to implement water conserving technology in new developments.

SUSTAINABILITY THEME: INFRASTRUCTURE

Charter Goal: Effective infrastructure and services that meet the current and future needs of the city, while protecting the natural environment and supporting urban growth.

Sustainability Outcome: All water is used efficiently and per capita water use is decreasing year over year.
APPENDIX

The following charts provide additional information on the demographic diversity of THRIVE! participants as well as their feedback on the event.

Figure A1 – Participants’ Age Breakdown

Figure A2 – Participants’ Current Employment Situation

Figure A3 – Participants’ Highest Level of Education